

This Week in Congress

February 7, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find it useful.

President Bush Gives State of the Union Address

On Wednesday evening, President Bush outlined many goals important to Kansans in his annual State of the Union address. I especially welcomed the President's leadership on cutting the deficit in half over the next four years. Next week, the President will unveil his 2006 budget. Reductions in government spending are expected. While cutting spending is never enjoyable, moving toward a balanced budget is the right thing to do-both economically and morally.

The President's main domestic agenda item during the speech was clearly reforming Social Security. There are structural problems with the Social Security Trust Fund. When Social Security started, we had 41 workers for every retiree. Now there are only three workers for each retiree. My priority is to address the deficit and quit spending the Social Security surplus. The President indicated that many options are on the table for discussion, and I am anxious to find sound solutions to make certain Social Security is protected now and into the future. I am anxious to hear from Kansans concerning the President's desire for personal or private accounts.

I will continue to keep you updated as Congress begins work on these challenging issues.

Addressing a joint Hearing of the Kansas House-Senate Agriculture Committees

On Thursday, I was invited by Kansas Senate Agriculture Chairman Mark Taddiken of Clifton and Kansas House Agriculture Chairman Dan Johnson of Hays to testify before a special joint hearing of the Kansas House and Senate Agriculture Committees in Topeka.

The hearing allowed me to update legislators as to what is being done on a federal level to

address the concerns facing our farmers and ranchers, including anticipated reductions in farm program spending and opening our beef markets with Japan. Additionally, we discussed the issues surrounding opening up the Canadian border and the discovery of the recent BSE cases, the upcoming farm bill, the importance of veterinary medicine and the need for a federal energy bill.

I also provided an update on my actions as Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. This past year, we held hearings on the need to address multi-year disasters and the importance of drought assistance.

I appreciated testifying before the Kansas House and Senate Agriculture Committees and look forward to continuing working with state lawmakers as we address the important issues facing agriculture.

Receiving the "Golden Plow" Award

Also while in Topeka this week, I received the American Farm Bureau Federation's Golden Plow Award. The award is presented annually in recognition of service, leadership and support for agriculture. My wife Robba joined nearly 400 Kansas Farm Bureau members and me at the dinner where American Farm Bureau Federation president Bob Stallman and Kansas Farm Bureau president Steve Baccus presented the award.

Supporting agriculture is something that I take very seriously-it is the lifeblood of our state. As the percentage of Congressional members who are from urban districts increases, it is even more important that we fight to protect this essential way of life. I am honored to receive this award, and I appreciate all of the help that I have received over the years from Farm Bureau members. I will continue to work to ensure that the needs of all Kansas farmers and ranchers are heard in the halls of Congress.

To read the full text of my speech, click: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/speech020205GoldenPlow.html

Crop Insurance Discussed with RMA Administrator Ross Davidson

On Tuesday, I met with Ross Davidson, Administrator for the Risk Management Agency (RMA), to discuss soybean rust and multi-year disaster insurance. For the past five years, parts of Kansas have suffered severe drought that has had a major effect on producers. At my urging, the RMA is now in the process of approving products that will address multi-year disasters. Additionally, we spoke about the potential for soybean rust in next year's crops, especially throughout the southern United States, and Davidson has assured me that crop insurance will cover producers, if they follow appropriate farming practices, should an outbreak of soybean rust occur. I will continue to follow up with Davidson to see that the RMA is addressing these concerns.

Working Toward Securing 'Hours of Service' Legislation

This week, I reintroduced legislation to secure an agriculture exemption to federal hours of service rules for truck drivers. This legislation mirrors legislation that passed the House last year but failed to make it into the final House-Senate highway bill.

This common sense exemption is important for our agriculture industry. Due to the unusual demands of harvesting season, truck drivers need an exemption that will allow them to move produce and farm supplies during the busy planting and harvest seasons. This is important so that we can move our goods to market quickly and guarantee the highest level of quality.

On the Road

Hays

On Thursday, I joined the Hays Chamber of Commerce for their annual meeting. The event was held in the Fort Hays State Union-Black and Gold room. It was good to visit with community and business leaders to get feedback on the economic outlook for the Hays community.

Emporia

On Saturday, I joined Dr. Kay Shallenkamp, President of Emporia State University, to watch the men's and women's basketball teams take on Northwest Missouri State. The Lady Hornets held off Northwest Missouri 78-71, while the men were outscored 71-76. Attendance at the ball game allowed me the opportunity to visit with many in the Emporia community about a variety of issues and to discuss Emporia State University and education issues with Dr. Shallenkamp.

On Sunday, I joined Dr. Leo Pauls at the 12th Street Baptist Church, where I addressed his Sunday school class, which is studying Christian leadership.

Veterans Meeting Planned for Sabetha

This coming Friday, February 11, I will host a public forum in Sabetha, designed to give area veterans an opportunity to discuss the delivery of benefits and health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). My guest for the event will be Robert Malone, Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Eastern Kansas Health Care System.

I hope this forum will provide veterans with an opportunity to discuss their needs and the challenges they face directly with those who are responsible for their care. Our country owes a tremendous debt to our veterans, and by hearing directly from them, we can do a better job of providing veterans with the highest quality of care possible.

The forum will be held on Friday, February 11, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Sabetha Middle School Auditorium, 751 Bluejay Boulevard.

I encourage all area veterans as well as other members of the public to attend this event.

In the Office

This week, a number of Kansans were in the office. In to discuss K-12 education issues were Carol Massieon of Seneca, Darlene Jones of Plainville, Norm Elliott of Morrowville, Rodney Roush of Stafford, Glennys Doane of Downs, Norman Johns of Johnson, Keith Becker of Glava and John Scheopner of Garden City. All were Kansas representatives from the National School Boards Association. In to discuss higher education needs was Dr. Phillip Kerstetter, President of the Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina. Dr. Chriss Walther-Thomas from the University of Kansas' Special Education Department was in to brief me on the new work that is being done at the school.

Also in the office, to discuss issues surrounding mental illness, were Karen Ford-Manza of Lawrence, Dr. Stephen Frienstein of Louisburg, Gerry Lichti of Wichita, Mary Odom of Hays and Steve Moffit of Chanute, who comprise the executive board for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

In for a tour of the U.S. Capitol this week were Rhonda Meyerhoff and her daughter Anna of Hays.

Very truly yours,

Jerry